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FROM : AMCONGEN, Lagos, Nigeria

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

REF :

DESP. NO. July 27, 1953
DATE

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SUBJECT: Fortnightly Newsletter - July 12-July 26, 1953

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POLITICAL

London Talks on Constitutional Revision Arranged; July 29th Beginning Date

Public announcement was made July 16, 1953 of date set for beginning London talks in re revision Nigerian constitution and numerical composition Regional representation for Nigeria. According to agreement between Governor MACPHERSON and Nigerian political leaders, Regional delegations to be made up as follows: North: 4 NPC, 1 NEPU, 1 Emir (to be nominated by NPC; East: 4 NCNC, 2 NIP; West: 4 Action Group, 1 NCNC, 1 Oba (to be nominated by AG), Cameroons: 1 representative.

Delegates began travels to London July 24th, with expenses of all delegates and one advisor to each delegation paid by Nigerian Government. (For names see Congen Despatch 18 of July 24, 1953)

Matters to be considered at London to include, (a) present constitutional difficulties which render it unworkable; (b) what changes should, therefor, now be made in the instrument; and (c) what steps are necessary to put suggested changes into effect. The Governor also stated that "the Secretary of State will also wish the question of self-government in 1956 to be raised at the London talks, but he has made it clear that this must not be regarded as in any way committing Her Majesty's Government to this proposition."

Comment: AG and NCNC party leaders crossed Regional lines at will in making up delegations. This undoubtedly calculated give each party strongest possible representation and represent all factions parties as well as small parties being wooed by Action Group and NCNC. Action Group choice Oni of Ife leaves entire conference without representation for independent or non-Action Group Western natural rulers; thus quieting an important Nigerian voice. Northern group's weak representation non-NPC parties met somewhat

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somewhat by AG and NCNC inclusion their delegations reps Askianist Movement, Middle Belt People's Party and NEPU. Observers should not overlook fact many Nigeria's present problems cannot be solved by simple revision written constitution. Conference cannot bring complete solution local political ills.

Local Nationalist Press Disappointed in Nkrumah

Local nationalist press mouthpieces have shown disappointment that NKRUMAH did not place deadline date for Gold Coast independence in his Legislative Assembly motion. These writers much more pleased with Dr. DANQUAH's demand for self-government in 1954. Adverse comments somewhat subdued, as papers realize Nkrumah is doing all right, on the whole.

Lagos Town Council Elections November 12, 1953

Elections new LTC expected to be held November 12. New council to be comprised of forty-one elected members and eight Lagos White Cap Chiefs, with Oba of Lagos as Council President. Voters lists expected to be compiled after August election to fill Western House of Assembly seat vacated by Azikiwe when he decided run in East.

Comment: Very small registration of voters for upcoming election for Lagos seat in Western House leading some observers to wonder if Lagos will have same minority-elected Council as have plagued so many other Town Councils throughout Nigeria. Turnout may well depend on whether or not Azikiwe and his NCNC wish to make determined effort to capture LTC as they did in 1951.

Onitsha Town Council Dissolved

Council of big Eastern town dissolved by Lt. Governor. Council appointed 1950 for three year stint. Application of Eastern Region Local Government bill, passed meanwhile, in nearby towns given as reason for dissolution without arrangement elections new Town Council. Dissolution proclamation stated Native Authority council will run town until new Urban Council set-up arranged.

Comment: Imminence of Urban Council gave ideal excuse to dissolve OTC, an action deemed advisable in face persistent charges rampant corruption in old Council. Onitsha only one of many Eastern towns whose Councils rendered inoperable or near-inoperable by corruption. Doubtful if new Urban Councils will achieve any substantial change this problem, caused, of course, by personnel of town bodies, not laws setting them up.

Confusion

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Confusion in Eastern Region Elections

Voters attempting to fill seats in elections to Eastern House of Assembly are presented with confusing tickets due to repetition of candidates' wavering on party affiliations as occurred in previous elections to old House. Dilemma of candidates a difficult one as clan and tribal affiliations far more important than party in many localities. Party leaders pressuring candidates to stand on their platforms, while candidates afraid of alienating important clans and tribes in their districts if they do so. If NCNC looks as if it has good control of House after elections many candidates will sign with party, as they did in previous legislature.

ECONOMIC

1952/53 Peanut Crop Tops Record 1951/52 Purchases

Nigeria's 1951/52 peanut crop reached a new record of 418,055 long tons; but, with purchases of the 1952/53 crop over, this year's crop totals 430,696 tons. Increases were shown in both the Kano area and the Rivers area this past crop. This record harvest of peanuts has presented the Nigeria Railway with a genuine challenge, as there are still over 14,000 long tons of last year's peanuts lying upcountry awaiting evacuation.

Erwin P. Keeler
American Consul General

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